

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00
DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01 FAA-00 L-03 /033 W
-----201849Z 118444 /47

R 201837Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8970

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FOR STATE AND CAB

E.O. 11652 N/A
TAGS: EAIR, FR.
SUBJECT: CIVAIR: TICKET REBATING

REF: PARIS 1397

L. SUMMARY: WE APPRISED DGAC OF DETAILS RECENT TEST TICKET OPERATION AGAINST PIA. ON BASIS ITS OWN EVIDENCE DGAC HAS ALREADY INITIATED COURT ACTION AGAINST PIA. DGAC INCLINED DOUBT SERIOUSNESS OF OUR INFO THAT TRAVEL AGENCIES ARE OFFERING DISCOUNTED TICKETS ON AIR FRANCE. CAB MAY WISH QUERY BONDUELLE FURTHER DURING LATTER'S FORTHCOMING VISIT TO WASHINGTON. END SUMMARY

2. CAA, ACCCOMPANIED BY COMMEAU OF PANAM, MET WITH THIEBLEMENT (ESPEROU'S DEPUTY) AND BONDUELLE OF DGAC ON JANUARY 19 AND BRIEFED THEM ON RECENT TEST TICKET OPERATION MOUNTED AGAINST PIA. WE GAVE THEM COPIES OF AFFADAVITS THAT HAD BEEN EXECUTED IN PARIS BY MERY AND COMMEAU.

3. BONDUELLE SAID THAT AFTER WARNING PIA ABOUT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TICKET DISCOUNTING LAST YEAR, DGAC HAD ACTED VIA MINISTRY OF JUSTICE TO INITIATE COURT ACTION AGAINST PIA ON BASIS OF EVIDENCE OF PIA DISCOUNTING WHICH DGAC HAD ITSELF UNCOVERED IN PARIS EARLIER THIS MONTH. CASE WILL GO BEFORE "TRIBUNAL DE SIMPLE POLICE," WHERE ALL CARRIER RISKS IS A FINE.

4. BONDUELLE EXPRESSED OPINION THAT DECREE BESTOWING ENFORCEMENT POWERS ON DGAC WAS SUFFICIENTLY BROAD IN ITS WORDING TO PERMIT DGAC TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST TRAVEL AGENCIES AS WELL AS CARRIERS ENGAGED IN TICKET DISCOUNTING. HE SAID THAT COPIES OF AFFADAVITS RECEIVED FROM EMBASSY WOULD BE SENT TO MINISTRY OF JUSTICE TO ADD TO DOSSIER AGAINST PIA, THOUGH SOMEWHAT TO OUR SURPRISE HE DID NOT SEEM INCLINED TO CONSIDER TAKING ANY ACTION AGAINST ISU, ORGANIZATION FROM WHICH MERY HAD PURCHASED PIA TEST TICKET, OR AGAINST RICHARDS OF ISU. (DGAC, INCIDENTALLY, APPEARS ALSO TO HAVE RECEIVED TELEXES FROM RICHARDS OR TO BE AWARE OF THOSE HE SENT TO AIR FRANCE.) WE INFORMED DGAC OFFICIALS THAT EMBASSY WAS WITHOUT ANY INSTRUCTIONS FOR ANY FOLLOW-UP ACTION VIS-A-VIS RICHARDS, WHO CLAIMED TO BE AN AMERICAN CITIZEN, AND HE WAS PROBABLY JUST A VERY SMALL-TIME OPERATOR ANYWAY.

5. AT CONCLUSION OF DISCUSSION THIEBLEMONT REMARKED THAT DGAC TOOK ITS ENFORCEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES SERIOUSLY AND CONTRARY TO WHAT MANY MIGHT ALLEGE "AIR FRANCE DIDN'T CONTROL DGAC ENFORCEMENT." BONDUELLE REMARKED PROUDLY THAT IN FACT AIR FRANCE WAS VERY FIRST CARRIER WHOSE TICKET OPERATIONS HE HAD CHECKED AT PARIS AIRPORTS. THIS PROVIDED

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NATURAL OPENING FOR CAA, AFTER COMMEAU'S DEPARTURE, TO

PASS ON TO DGAC OFFICIALS INFOR ON DISCOUNTED TICKETS ON AIR FRANCE SCHEDULED FLIGHTS TO NEW YORK THAT HAD BEEN MADE BY TWO SEPARATE TRAVEL AGENCIES. AFTER A FEW AWKWARD MOMENTS BONDUELLE EXPRESSED DOUBT AS TO SERIOUSNESS OF THESE OFFERS, NOTING THAT SOMETIMES AGENCIES OFFER DISCOUNTED TRAVEL ON WELL-KNOWN CARRIER AS A COME-ON AND THEN SELL TRAVELER CHEAP TICKET ON PIA, FOR EXAMPLE. CAA SAID THAT THIS MIGHT WELL BE THE CASE, AND HE ADMITTED THAT WHEN HE HAD PHONED THE TWO AGENCIES RECENTLY HE HAD BEEN UNABLE TO ELICIT AN OFFER FOR DISCOUNTED TRAVEL ON AIR FRANCE BUT HAD INSTEAD BEEN OFFERED LOW-COST CHARTER TRAVEL FROM PARIS OR BRUSSELS IN ONE CASE AND IN THE OTHER CASE A DISCOUNTED TICKET ON WHAT WAS OBVIOUSLY PIA. HOWEVER, EMBASSY HAD NO REASON TO DOUBT ACCURACY OF REPORT IT HAD RECEIVED ON ACTUAL OFFER OF DISCOUNTED TRAVEL ON AIR FRANCE. THE MATTER WAS LET DROP THERE, WITHOUT ANY ASSURANCE THAT WE WOULD HEAR ANYTHING MORE ON IT FROM THE DGAC.

6. ON SUBJECT OF TEST TICKET OPERATIONS, BONDUELLE
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SAID HE WAS NOT SURE WHETHER UNDER FRENCH LAW DGAC COULD FINANCE PURCHASE OF TEST TICKETS TO SECURE EVIDENCE OF TICKET DISCOUNTING, SINCE THIS MIGHT BE CONSTRUED AS ACT OF PROVOCATION OR ENTRAPMENT.

7. COMMENT: DURING BONDUELLE'S FORTHCOMING VISIT WITH CAB ENFORCEMENT STAFF, CAB MIGHT WISH INQUIRE WHETHER DGAC DOES INTEND ALSO TO CRACK DOWN ON TRAVEL AGENCIES. SHADY OPERATORS ADVERTISING LOW COST TRAVEL IN CLASSIFIED SECTION OF INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE SHOULD BE PRIME TARGETS. CAB MIGHT ALSO EXPRESS INTEREST IN LEARNING MANNER OF FOLLOW-UP AND RESULTS OF ANY DGAC INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED AIR FRANCE DISCOUNTING ON NORTH ATLANTIC BASED ON INFO EMBASSY PROVIDED TO DGAC.
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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